

Early Resolution and Mediation Project (E-RAMP)



What is E-RAMP?

The 11th Judicial District (Flathead County) Early Resolution and Mediation (E-RAMP) program offers mediation services at no cost to eligible parties in domestic relations cases.

What cases are eligible for E-RAMP?

- Both parties do not have an attorney
- Both parties are financially eligible
- No history of domestic violence
- Capacity to make informed decisions
- No child protective services involvement.

What is mediated in E-RAMP?

- **Parenting time** (includes time sharing, communication, and making decisions about the children).
- **Dissolutions** (divorce) division of property and debts of the marriage.

Who mediates E-RAMP cases? E-RAMP is fortunate to have qualified, community volunteer attorney mediators trained specifically for E-RAMP mediations.

What should I expect my E-RAMP mediation? E-RAMP uses a facilitative mediation model. That means you will be in the same room with the other party while the mediator helps you clarify your issues, resolve conflicts, and to assist you in communicating with the other party to reach an agreement.

If the court places my case in E-RAMP, can I choose not to participate? Yes. There is an opt-out process if you have reasons you cannot mediate with the other party. That opt-out is made available to you after the Intake and education process. It is important both parties enter into mediation willingly.

How Does E-RAMP Work?

How does my case end up in E-RAMP?

Once a case Response is filed, you receive information or an order from the court showing you what to do. You will fill out the E-RAMP Intake form. There are documents you will file with the court or exchange with your husband or wife. E-RAMP has videos and written information to help you understand important issues about your case.

What happens after my case is placed into E-RAMP? You and the other party will be notified about your placement in E-RAMP. You will receive important information about the mediation process and be scheduled for your mediation session.

What happens on the E-RAMP mediation day? E-RAMP mediations are conducted on specific days based on the court's calendar and volunteer mediator availability.

- The court informs you of mediation date and time and both parties are expected to appear in court at that time.
- The mediator will review mediation guidelines, how the process works, and answer any questions you might have about mediation.
- You, the other party, and the mediator will attempt to resolve your family law disputes in a 2-3 hour mediation session.
- If you do not resolve all issues, you may request additional mediation time if the mediator believes you are close to resolution.

What is Mediation?

Mediation is a way to mutually agree on the terms of your divorce or parenting plan with the help of a mediator.

- ✓ You and the other party get to decide the outcome of your case instead of a judge.
- ✓ You can still continue in court if mediation does not work out.
- ✓ Mediation is confidential.
- ✓ No one can use what you say in mediation against you in court.
- ✓ Mediators help guide the process of communication to arrive at an agreement both parties can accept.
- ✓ E-RAMP offers you the opportunity to participate in mediation at no cost to you.

Mediators are trained to help you resolve your disputes with the other party.

- ✓ A mediator cannot force you to accept an agreement you do not like.
- ✓ Mediators are neutral, which means they do not advocate for one party or the other.
- ✓ Mediators do not tell you what you should do for your children. That's your decision.
- ✓ Mediators do not and cannot give legal advice to either party.
- ✓ You should legal seek advice before mediation if you are not sure of your legal rights or responsibilities
- ✓ If you participate in E-RAMP, it is very important that you are able to make, independent and informed choices when you deal with the other party.

Flathead County Self-Help Law Center

Flathead County Justice Center - 920 South Main -
406-758-2496

E-mail: flatheadcountyselfhelp@mt.gov

www.courts.mt.gov/selfhelp

Abbie Shelter (Flathead County)

Crisis Line: 406-752-7273

Office Line: 406-752-4735

www.abbieshelter.org

Frequently Asked Questions

What if there is a history of domestic violence between the parties? If you are intimidated by your partner and cannot be an equal negotiating partner, mediation may not be for you. E-RAMP styled mediation is not appropriate for cases where the other party has attempted to control you through force, intimidation or threat of violence. The program may be able to assist you in finding a mediator that is trained in domestic violence if you choose to mediate your case outside of E-RAMP. You should contact the local domestic violence program and speak to an advocate who can help you decide whether you can participate in mediation safely and effectively. If you are a victim of domestic violence, Montana law says you cannot be required to participate in mediation if you don't want to.

How do I get into E-RAMP? The court will instruct you how to complete the Intake Form when a Response to a petition has been filed with the court. The confidential results of the Intake will determine if you are eligible for E-RAMP, and the court will notify you of the next steps.

What happens when an agreement is reached in mediation? If you reach an agreement the day of your E-RAMP mediation, the mediator will help you and the other party write and sign the agreement. A judge case will be available to finalize your case if all of the issues are resolved.

What happens if we don't reach an agreement in mediation? Even if mediation doesn't resolve all of the conflicts in your case, mediation can help you make some of your decisions so there is less to decide in court.

Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED)

406-327-7910 or (406) 655-550

www.dphhs.mt.gov/CSED

Montana Legal Services Association

1-800-666-6899

www.mtlsa.org

Safe Harbor (Lake County)

406-883-3350

Safeharbormt.org